

The Lifestyles Department: School Lunches

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September is here...it's THAT time of year again! That time of year when parents are relieved to send their bored kids back to school, but dread packing lunches 5 days a week. It can be tricky to send meals that are allergy-friendly, don't require heating and, to top it all off, appealing to your kids.

Here are some tips that may help ease you into the packing lunch routine:

1. **Brainstorm with your kids a list of foods that they like to eat for lunch.** Post this list somewhere that is visible as you are packing lunch and that can be added to as new ideas arise.
2. **Pick a time in your schedule that works best.** Packing lunches can be added to the bedtime routine so that no one is frantically throwing things together during the hectic morning.
3. **Involve your kids.** Whether it is coming up with food ideas, grocery shopping, or cutting up fruit and veggies, kids are more likely to eat meals that they have had a role in preparing.
4. **Cook once, eat twice!** Plan to make enough food at meal times to be able to send leftovers for lunch.
5. **Remember that the quality of your parenting is not dependent on cutting their sandwiches and fruit into animal shapes!** I used to send a "Joke of the Day" in my kids' lunches when they were younger and they have no recollection of it. All that wasted humour....



I thought I would share a few other ideas from some blogs that I came upon. The first is from onelovelylife.com. It is a chart of food groups. You could simply pack a food from each group to give your child a balanced meal with variety. Add your child's favourite foods to this chart.

PROTEINS	CARBS	FRUIT	VEGGIES	FUN
hard boiled eggs	pretzels	applesauce	carrots	energy bites
hummus	crackers	strawberries	bell peppers	fruit leather
turkey	bagel	blackberries	snap peas	cookie
ham	bread	blueberries	cucumber	trail mix
chicken	English muffin	raspberries	jicama	granola bar
pepperoni	tortilla	watermelon	celery	chocolate
salami	waffle	pineapple		fruit snacks
yogurt	pancake	mango		
seeds	muffin	orange		
beans	sweet potato	raisins		
	rice			
	pasta			
	granola			



All sandwiched out? Here are some non-sandwich ideas from thekitchn.com :

Food on sticks: It doesn't have to be the traditional kebob with meat and veggies...eating anything on a stick is more fun!

Quesadillas: And then pack fun dips like salsa or guacamole.

Spring rolls: Use rice paper or lettuce leaves to wrap them up.

Deli meat roll-up: Roll up anything you would put in a sandwich with a slice of deli meat.

Cold noodle salads: Your kids don't have to call it a "salad", it's just pasta served cold!

Charcuterie: Anything that would be served on a charcuterie board can be packed into a lunch: meat, cheese, crackers, seeds, fruit, veggies, pickles, dipping sauces. Try a new kind of cheese or crackers for variety.

Breakfast for lunch: What kid doesn't like pancakes or waffles? Send leftovers with syrup to dip. Add eggs, sausage, yogurt and fruit.

HAPPY PACKING!!!